

Franchot, Morella Exchange Fire on 'Star Wars'

*Challenger Says Vote Demonstrates 'Waffling';
Incumbent Says Charges Will Backfire*

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Peter Franchot, the Democratic challenger in Maryland's 8th Congressional District, held another of his trademark news conferences yesterday to attack the voting record of Rep. Constance A. Morella—this time criticizing the first-term incumbent's record on funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Morella, in what also has become ritual in the campaign, defended her record and accused Franchot of distortions, all the while portraying herself as busy at work while her opponent is meeting the press.

Franchot, an acknowledged underdog in his bid to unseat Republican Morella, has adopted a strategy of striking hard, often and publicly against votes she cast since her election in 1986. One Montgomery County political analyst likened Franchot to "a heat-seeking missile," saying that Franchot did a better job of attacking Morella's record during last week's debate than she did in defending it.

Morella conceded that she is somewhat on the defensive, forced to respond to what she calls Franchot's "glittering generalities" about her record. But she said she is confident her message that she is an independent voice who deserves reelection is getting before the voters and that Franchot's strategy will backfire.

Franchot answered charges that he is distorting Morella's record by quoting President Harry S. Truman that "my opponents say that I am giving them hell. Actually what I am doing is telling the truth and it is so bad they think it is hell."

Yesterday's news conference had all the markings of a Franchot media event—the freshman state delegate from Takoma Park was late and interest in the event had been piqued by the announcement that former director of central intelligence William Colby would be present. Franchot has previously shown a penchant for props.

Colby, who headed the CIA from 1973 to 1976, said during the news conference that he knew Franchot from when Franchot worked as an aide to Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and that he wanted to work for the election of candidates who would further arms control.

The issue—funding of current Strategic Defense Initiative programs, known as "Star Wars"—offers a good example of Franchot's standing charge that Morella "waffles" by voting both sides and of Morella's response that Franchot confuses independence with inconsistency and that he doesn't present the whole picture of her votes.

Franchot took issue with Morella's 1987 and 1988 votes opposing a Democratic amendment to a defense appropriations bill that would have authorized just \$1.2 billion funding for "Star Wars." Supporters of the amendment sponsored by Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.), which was opposed by President Reagan, said that it would have eliminated \$3.6 billion in SDI funding while still providing money for basic research.

Acknowledging that Morella has also opposed measures to increase SDI funding, Franchot argued that "Morella is waffling again, trying to be all things to all voters. If she

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agrees with the experts who say that 'Star Wars' will never work, she should vote for the Democratic amendment which would curtail the program."

Morella said she favors SDI research but is opposed to its deployment. She said a vote for the Dellums amendment would have been "irresponsible" because it would have eliminated the basic research that she sees as a spinoff benefit. Morella said that the full House vote was overwhelming in opposition to the amendment, with many Democrats opposing it.

Morella said that she opposed efforts to increase funding closer to the \$5.8 billion favored by Reagan and that the \$3.1 billion she eventually voted for was a compromise.

Morella also pointed to her endorsements by Peace Political Action Committee, an organization headed by the Rev. Robert A. Drinan, and Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament. Michelle Robinson, executive director of Peace PAC, said Morella's SDI votes were weighed and she had "a tremendous voting record on these issues for a first-term Republican . . . and we look to see her continue that voting record."

Franchot dismissed the group as "some national organization that no one ever heard of" and which is desperate to endorse Republicans to show it is bipartisan. The group endorsed Morella before Franchot entered the race based on her voting record, but Franchot said he later sought the group's endorsement.